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Provisional

8329th meeting
Wednesday, 22 August 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Pierce	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Ms. Bico Mbasogo
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: We meet today in the wake of yet another series of violent escalations that threatened to plunge Gaza into war. Over the past several weeks, Special Coordinator Mladenov has led unprecedented United Nations efforts with the Government of Egypt and other regional and international partners to prevent another devastating outbreak of hostilities, respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs and support intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

The recurring violence highlights the urgency of that initiative. In several rounds of hostilities throughout the reporting period, Palestinian militants fired some 195 rockets and mortars towards Israel. On 7 August, one Grad rocket reportedly landed in an open field near the city of Beersheba — the furthest that a projectile has been fired since the 2014 hostilities.

Israel targeted sites in the Gaza Strip on at least 125 occasions. Eight Palestinians, including a pregnant woman and her 18-month-old baby, were killed, while 56 Palestinians and 28 Israeli civilians were injured. Such exchanges, which have escalated in recent months, underline the fragility of the interim periods of calm and the need for longer-term solutions.

In recent weeks, the humanitarian situation in Gaza also deteriorated further due, in part, to additional restrictions that Israel imposed on the movement of goods through the Kerem Shalom crossing. That was in reaction to the launching of incendiary kites and balloons from Gaza, which have burned thousands of acres of Israeli fields, forests and agricultural land.

On 15 August, Israel fully reopened the Kerem Shalom crossing and expanded the fishing zone to nine nautical miles. The Secretary-General welcomed the decision as having a significant impact on the struggling Gaza economy and on efforts to de-escalate the situation. However, on 19 August, Israel closed the Erez pedestrian crossing to the residents of Gaza and the West Bank, except for humanitarian cases, citing continued violent incidents at the fence.

As we work towards the full lifting of the closures on Gaza, in line with resolution 1860 (2009), I call on all parties to ensure that the urgently needed humanitarian supplies reach the Gaza Strip. Such supplies should not be held hostage to political and security developments.

I also reiterate the previous calls of the Special Coordinator to Hamas to provide full information on the Israeli nationals who are being held in Gaza, as required by international humanitarian law. The United Nations is taking steps to increase its capacity on the ground to better support energy, water, health and job-creation projects endorsed by the Palestinian Authority and the international community. I am pleased to note that many donors and international organizations are looking into increasing their allocations for Palestine. That is the appropriate response to Gaza's crumbling infrastructure and collapsing economy. In particular, I am encouraged by the World Bank's increased $90-million allocation for the West Bank and Gaza, including for some 4,400 short-term employment opportunities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is also accelerating its emergency economic assistance programme with support from several donors. Both efforts focus on employment for women and young people as a priority. The UNDP programme aims to have 40 per cent of the resulting job placements for women — a critical step given that the unemployment rate for Palestinian women continued to be significantly higher than for men, exceeding 78 per cent in Gaza in the second quarter of 2018.

That follows the launch in May of the Decent Work for Women programme — a joint Italian, UN-Women and International Labour Organization initiative to promote equal and decent work opportunities throughout the occupied Palestinian territory — as well as the launch last April of a UN-Women project, funded by Japan, to support women in Gaza. Improving the socioeconomic status of Palestinian women is essential to peace and stability, as women remain more vulnerable throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. Those are also important efforts to strengthen women's role in

preventing conflict, in line with the Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security.

However, I am deeply concerned that funding for United Nations emergency fuel, which sustains some 250 critical facilities in Gaza, has now run out. Approximately $4.5 million is urgently required to ensure a minimum level of essential services up to the end of the year. Also of concern is a dangerously short supply of essential medicines, with 40 per cent of essential drugs completely depleted.

The United Nations is working with the Governments of Israel and Palestine on reviewing the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism to improve its functionality, transparency and predictability. The Palestinian Authority has also made great efforts to reassert its engagement in support of Gaza. I look forward to its full and active participation in that regard. I also welcome Egypt's continued efforts to facilitate intra-Palestinian reconciliation, critical to advancing not only Gaza's humanitarian and development objectives but also Palestinian national aspirations. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on all parties to support those efforts.

We have been regularly updating the Security Council and its members on the unprecedented financial challenge that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faces this year. The Secretary-General has warned that failing to address UNRWA's remaining $217 million funding shortfall will have serious humanitarian and development consequences, as well as implications for regional stability. I thank Member States that have taken steps to assist in closing the shortfall and call on others to increase their support to UNRWA. It is imperative to maintain a strong collective mobilization.

Turning to the broader situation, violent incidents continue to take place throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. In Gaza, 13 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces during continued protests near the perimeter fence, including one medical worker and four children. Some 1,000 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were also injured. On 21 August, Israel's Military Advocate General announced that military police investigations would be opened into the deaths of two Palestinians killed during protests near the fence in recent months. While Israel has a duty to protect its citizens, it must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire and refrain from using lethal force, except as a last resort. I further call on Hamas to avoid violence at the fence and refrain from putting children in harm's way. Children should never be targeted or instrumentalized in any way.

On 26 July in the West Bank settlement of Adam, a 17-year-old Palestinian stabbed an Israeli civilian to death and injured two others. He was shot and killed by one of the victims. It is deplorable that Hamas and others once again chose to glorify that attack. After a period of relative calm in Jerusalem, on 27 July, the one-year anniversary of the resolution of last year's unrest at the Holy Esplanade, clashes erupted at the site between Palestinians and the Israeli security forces, during which 10 Palestinians and four Israeli police officers were injured. On 17 August, an Israeli-Arab man was shot dead by Israeli security forces in Jerusalem's Old City, after attempting to stab them. Following both incidents, Israeli security forces closed the entrances to the compound for a few hours before restoring full access. With the celebration of Eid Al-Adha this week and the Jewish holidays approaching, I urge all to do their part to avoid provocations at Jerusalem's holy sites. The Special Coordinator conducted a series of meetings with Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders in Jerusalem to discuss the importance of maintaining calm, rejecting violence and ensuring the status quo is preserved at the holy sites. He will continue his engagement with all stakeholders.

On 14 August, Israeli authorities announced they would publish a tender for 603 units in the Ramat Shlomo settlement in East Jerusalem — the first such announcement since 2016. In Area C, a tender for 511 housing units was published and construction based on previously approved plans continued. On 1 August, the Israeli Civil Administration confirmed its intention to expand the municipal boundaries of the Amichai settlement to include the outpost of Adei Ad. If implemented, it would result in the first outpost legalization under Israeli law since 2014. I reiterate the long-standing position of the United Nations that all settlement activities are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

Israeli authorities demolished 18 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and East Jerusalem for lack of building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. As a result, eight Palestinians were displaced, including six children. On 1 August, Israel's High Court of Justice indicated that it had not

found sufficient reason to prevent the demolition of the Bedouin village of Khan Al-Ahmar. It instructed the State to present an alternative relocation site, on which the parties have not agreed. Demolition is on hold while the Court considers the case. I reiterate United Nations calls on Israel to cease the demolition of Palestinian property and efforts to relocate Bedouin communities in the occupied West Bank. Such actions are contrary to international law and undermine the two-State solution.

I would like to conclude by highlighting the efforts of ordinary women and men — Israeli and Palestinian — who overcome cynicism and despair by taking tangible steps to promote tolerance and forge a shared future. They include volunteers who drive Palestinian patients to medical appointments in Israel; youth leaders who are finding creative ways to build a shared future among Jerusalem's communities; scientists working together to solve regional environmental challenges and Palestinian and Israeli women mobilizing constituencies for peace and promoting the participation of women in the political process, in line with resolution 1325 (2000). As outlined in the 2016 Middle East Quartet report (S/2016/595, annex), such initiatives provide a crucial foundation for broader peace efforts. I invite Member States to continue to generously support them. Even as the international community focuses on resolving the current crisis in Gaza and returning a legitimate Palestinian Government to the Gaza Strip, the perseverance of those individuals reminds of the need to review our efforts in the context of our broader goal to end the Israeli occupation and achieve a future with two States living side by side in peace, security and dignity, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and previous agreements.

The President: I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.